

# **HIS NAME IS JOHN**

**By Rod**

*This sketch is based on Luke 1 vv 5-25 and Luke 1 vv 57-65. It contains two scenes approximately 9 months apart. This may mean that the two scenes need to be introduced so that the audience knows that they are set at different times.*

## **CAST**

*Zechariah      Man. Needs to be reasonably old!*  
*Gabriel        Angel. Perhaps dressed in white.*  
*Elizabeth      Female. Needs to be reasonably old!*  
*Ruth            Female.*  
*Jeremiah       Male*

## **SCENE ONE – THE INNER TEMPLE**

*There is a table, centre stage – to look as much like an altar as possible. It must have some candles on it. Enter Zechariah carrying a bottle of wine and a glass. He pours himself a glass of wine and drinks from it in a satisfied way. He arranges things on the altar, concentrating hard. Gabriel enters quietly, unnoticed by Zechariah and stands to the side but just behind Zechariah. Zechariah goes to light the candle but realises he has no matches. He searches on the altar, he checks his pockets, sighs (irritated that he has forgotten them) and turns as if to go and get them. As he does so he suddenly notices Gabriel and is shocked.*

Zechariah      Ah. ... er who are you?

Gabriel        Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayers have been answered.

Zech            Prayers?

Gab            Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son.

Zech            A son?

Gab            And you are to give him the name John.

Zech            John?

Gab            He will be a joy and a delight to you.

Zech            *[Sarcastic]* No sleepless nights or nappies then!

Gab            And many will rejoice because of his birth.

Zech           An expensive party, you mean!

Gab            For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

Zech           So he's going to be a big baby then!

Gab            He is never to take wine or other fermented drinks.

Zech           No wine! *[Looks at bottle on table to emphasis how incredulous he finds this]*

Gab            And he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

Zech           Holy Spirit!

Gab            Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Zech           Elijah!

Gab            He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous...

Zech           He'll do what?

Gab            .. – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Zech           Look, son, I don't know who you are or how you got in here, but my wife and I weren't born yesterday, and at our age we don't expect to have a son born tomorrow.

Gab            *[Importantly]* I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

Zech           *[Realising his mistake]* Oh Gabriel. Look I'm sorry, I thought you were...

Gab            *[Interrupting. Sternly]* And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.

*Zechariah goes to speak but finds he can't. Exit Gabriel importantly. Zechariah looks bemused. He gulps a drink of wine and hurries off.*

*END OF SCENE ONE*

SCENE TWO

9 MONTHS LATER, OUTSIDE THE HOME OF ELIZABETH AND ZECHARIAH

*Enter Elizabeth with a baby in her arms. Enter Ruth and Jeremiah. They notice Elizabeth.*

Ruth            *[To Jeremiah]* Look, Jeremiah, there's Elizabeth with her new baby.

Jeremiah        Oh yes. Isn't it wonderful. They must have given up all hope of ever becoming parents at their age. And to have a boy too. It's fantastic.

Ruth            *[Approaching Elizabeth]* Hello, Elizabeth. May we inspect your little bundle?

Elizabeth        Of course.

Ruth            *[Looking at baby]* Oh, isn't he gorgeous. He's got his father's eyes.

Jer                What are you going to call him? Zechariah after his father I assume?

Elizabeth        No, his name is John.

Jer                John!

Ruth            Why John? There is no-one among your relatives who has that name.  
*[Enter Zechariah]*

Jer                *[Noticing Zechariah]* I think we'd better check with the father.

Ruth            *[To Jeremiah]* Don't forget poor Zechariah is dumb.

Jer                Oh, right. I'll make signs. *[Starts cradling arms to Zechariah to indicate 'baby'. Then to Ruth.]* I can do 'baby' but how do you do 'name'?

Ruth            I know. *[Touches ear]*

Jer                *[Surprised]* Ear? What are you doing? *[Suddenly realising]* Oh, I get it. Sounds like. *[Ruth nods and then starts to limp in exaggerated manner]* Sounds like limp. Hobble. Lame. That's it! Sounds like lame. Name. Brilliant. *[Looks at Zechariah expectantly. Goes through signs again and says very loudly and deliberately]* Baby's ... name.

*Zechariah starts to sign his reply. He points to self, shakes head and then covers ears*

Jer                I. Not. Deaf. Eh?

Ruth I'm not deaf.

Elizabeth He's telling you he's dumb not deaf.

Jer Oh, right. Sorry Zechariah. What would you like to name the child.

*Zechariah starts to sign his reply. He touches his ear..Jeremiah and Ruth start to guess.*

Jer Sounds like. Nice one, Zechariah. You're good at this. *[Zechariah mimes putting something "On" something.]* Um, sounds like "above" ... over .. er *[Zechariah shakes his head]*

Ruth On. *[Zechariah nods]* Sounds like "On". *[Zechariah gives thumbs up and encourages them to start guessing]*

Jer *[Thinking]* Sounds like on. Von. *[In german accent]* Von Zechariah. From Zechariah. It makes perfect sense. The son is from the father. *[Pauses]* But you are not German. *[Zechariah is shaking his head]*

Ruth I know -Ron. *[Starts singing]* Somebody told me that his name was Ron  
Da do Ron Ron Ron,  
Da do Ron Ron  
*[Zechariah shakes head. He indicates that he wants something to write on. Elizabeth gets him a paper and pen. He writes on it. Meanwhile Ruth and Jeremiah continue to guess]*

Jer *[To himself]* Don. *[In Australian accent]* Ah great name cobber. He's going to be a famous cricketer. *[Mimes batting and striking a boundary. Then as if commentating]* There's four more for the Don. What a player. *[Zechariah shows writing to Ruth.]*

Ruth *[Reading]* His name is John.

Jer John. Of course. Sounds like On – John. *[Realising]* But that's what Elizabeth said in the first place.

Zech *[Moves towards Elizabeth and baby. Waxes eloquent.]* That's right, John. That's what the angel Gabriel told me is his name. His name is John. He will be a prophet of the Most High and will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him. To give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

Jer *[To Ruth. They have moved away, rather worried by the fact that Zechariah can now speak and by what he is saying]* What is he on about?

Ruth Beats me. I think I preferred it when he was silent.

Jer Me too. *[Zechariah and Elizabeth have moved together and are admiring the baby]* Still, maybe this baby will turn out to be something special – he’s certainly had an effect on old Zechariah and Elizabeth. It’s funny how babies change things.

Ruth In my experience it’s not the babies that do the changing.  
*[Elizabeth passes baby to Zechariah. He notices a smell. Holds up baby as if smelling his nappy. Makes a face. Elizabeth reaches in a bag to produce a nappy which she hands to Zechariah. He looks horrified at the prospect of having to change the baby]*

*THE END*